

Camping Sunday Service We Cannot Keep from Singing

Sunday, April 26, 2009

Call to Worship *(based on Psalm 100):*

One: Shout to God, all the earth:
All: worship with gladness and joy.
One: Come before God with laughter,
All: our maker to whom we belong.
One: To the Shepherd who tends us like sheep,
All: let us raise our voices in song.
One: Come to God's gates with thanks;
All: come to God's courts with praise.
One: Praise and bless God's name.
All: "Truly you are good:
One: you are always gracious,
All: and faithful age after age."

Opening Prayer *(based on Song of Solomon 2:11-12):*

One: For now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth. The time of singing has come and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.
All: Creator God, may the wisdom of the earth open us to mystery; let the music of its forest streams delight us and the simplicity of its wild flowers captivate our hearts.
Amen.

Hymn: "Come, Let Us Sing" (VU 222) or "Let Us Build a House" (MV 1)

Children's Time

Options: Worshipping with Music or Praise Chairs (see below)

Worshipping with Music

Praise God with the trumpet sound; praise God with lute and harp! Praise God with tambourine and dance; praise God with strings and pipe! Praise God with clanging cymbals; praise God with loud clashing cymbals! Let everything that breathes praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! (Psalm 150: 3-6)

You will need:

Several familiar songs or hymns that the children know. Suggestions: “Jesus Loves Me” (VU 365); “It Only Takes a Spark” (VU 289); “This Is God’s Wondrous World” (VU 296); “All Things Bright and Beautiful” (VU 291); “This Is the Day” (MV 122).

Activities:

As the children arrive, have someone playing quietly on the piano some of the familiar songs or hymns—to get them motivated! Direct them to join together in a circle. Have the pianist play the first three notes of a tune the children know, and have them guess the name of it. You could also direct one of the children to whistle the first three notes of the tune. Then have the person who guesses be the next whistler. Notes are added three at a time until someone guesses the tune. If no one guesses, the piano player tells what the tune was, and starts another. Alternatively, the whistler tells what the tune was and chooses a new whistler. Close by talking about making music as one way to worship God.

Praise Chairs (A Version of Musical Chairs)

You will need:

Paper, marker, prepared index cards tape, Bible, an instrument (if you play one) or a CD player, and lively worship music. References from the Psalms for eight index cards: Psalm 98:1; 65:8; 96:1–4; 100:2; 107:21–22; 126:1–2; 126:6; 138:1–2.

Activities:

Place enough chairs in a circle so that there is one for each student, or have the children sit in a circle. Label one of the places in the circle as the “Praise Chair” or “Praise Seat.” In this place, stack the index cards, face down. Lay the Bible on the floor in the centre of the circle, opened to the Psalms. Play a lively worship song (on your own instrument or from a CD). Ask the children to walk around the circle as you play the song. Instruct them to sit in the place closest to them when the music stops. Stop the music at random. The child who sits in the “Praise Seat” takes the top card from the stack and turns to the Psalm in the Bible and reads the verse. Ask the children why the writer of this Psalm wanted to worship or what kind of song this scripture tells us about.

Close by talking about why we worship when we come together. Why would God want people to worship with music? God wants us to worship with everything we have and all that we do. God wants to be at the centre of our hearts. Our music comes from our hearts and expresses our feelings. God loves us and wants to know about our feelings and what is in our hearts. Music is one way we can do this. And that’s worship!

Psalm: Psalm 95:1-7 (*can be read slowly while music is quietly played*)

Gospel: John 4:7–10, 28–29 (*When the woman of Samaria met Jesus, she knew her life would never be the same again. She left her water and ran back to the city singing his praises!*)

Hymn: “For the Music of Creation” (VU 535) or “It’s a Song of Praise to the Maker” (MV 30)

Responsive Reading (*from We Cannot Keep from Singing, p. 25*):

One: Each part of creation reveals unique aspects of God the Creator, who is both in creation and beyond it.

All: All parts of creation, animate and inanimate, are related.

One: All creation is good.

All: We sing of the Creator, who made humans to live and move and have their being in God.

One: In and with God, we can direct our lives toward right relationship with each other and with God.

All: We can discover our place as one strand in the web of life.

One: We can grow in wisdom and compassion.

All: We can recognize all people as kin.

One: We can accept our mortality and finitude, not as a curse, but as a challenge to make our lives and choices matter.

Message: Creation is a Gift from God

God saw everything that [God] had made, and indeed, it was very good. (Genesis 1:31)

We believe that the ministry of camping is, with God's help, an experience of Christian community and learning for all people, shared in an outdoor setting as part of the fabric of the education, outreach and evangelism of the United Church of Canada. Our purpose is to provide a growing experience in the out of doors for all people.

Our aim is to help campers and leaders have fun while they grow spiritually, experience the love of God and the fellowship of friends and leaders, gain respect for self and others, increase their appreciation of the natural world, learn sportsmanship and safety and acquire skills and knowledge. Program is all that happens at camp. All aspects of our camp program should lead to the fulfillment of our objectives.

Reflecting on the purpose and objectives of United Church Camping we are reminded that experiencing Christian community and learning in an outdoor setting means we are living, at least for a short time, very close to nature and to God.

The hymn "This Is God's Wondrous World" (VU 296) reminds us of that.

I invite you now to close your eyes and experience with me one of wonders of God's World.

The Storm (*from In Care of Creation, United Church of Canada, 1989, p. 9*)

It is a summer evening. The day has been very hot but now there is just a hint of a cool breeze. All around are the sounds of summer; the crickets, the birds, the laughter of children playing in

the distance. As you sit quietly, you sense stillness in the air. For a few moments there is a hush all about you. Perhaps the weather is going to change. Perhaps there will be some rain.

The sky is quickly becoming very dark with great thunder clouds which seem to roll by so effortlessly. The wind has increased and the dust is beginning to swirl about. Streaks of lightning break the black clouds in the distance and there is a far off rumble. The lightning is coming closer and now the time between the flash of light and the roll of thunder is much shorter. The wind is rushing around and around and the branches begin to sway and moan.

Suddenly a great flash of light brightens everything all around. There is a crack of thunder almost immediately afterwards. You can feel the energy of the approaching storm. Your body quickens with excitement. And then...the rain starts, first a few drops and then a few more, harder this time. All of a sudden the rain is pounding the ground with such fury that you must seek cover quickly. You find shelter but you are already very wet. The lightning and thunder and rain come with such force and energy. The sky is brilliant with light and trembling with the thunder.

It rains and rains and rains and you can hardly see in front of you. It is so refreshing to feel the coolness of the rain after the steaming heat of the day.

As quickly as it arrived the storm begins to fade. There is only the occasional flash of light and the rumbling seems so distant.

You can smell the rain as it now falls more and more gently. Steam rises around you from the ground. The feeling of excitement and energy from the storm is gone and all is quiet.

Drops from the leaves break the silence and now a robin sings. He hops to the grassy patch nearby and tugs on a worm.

The storm was intense, at times almost frightening, but you felt the thrill of its fury. You sit back and your body relaxes as it enjoys the cool relief that the storm has left behind.

Prayer:

Creator God, help us to develop a sense of awe and wonder and love for creation: Although your creation is threatened by many problems, we thank you for your living presence in and around us. We pray in your name. Amen.

Hymn: “I, the Lord of Sea and Sky” (VU 509) or “Watch Once More the Windswept Storm Clouds” (MV 55)

Prayers:

Gracious God, as we think of you we are reminded that we are a small part in the web of life. Thank you for your many gifts to us. Today we thank you especially for the ministry of camping and the dedicated people who work so hard on behalf of this ministry. We remember in our prayers the campers: children and adults who arrive, some anxious or troubled, and leave with a song in their hearts. We remember the people who create the programs, tell bedtime stories,

teach the songs, sing the songs, cook the meals, wipe away tears, bandage a scraped knee. Bless them and help us to help them. *You are invited to add to this list and continue with other "Prayers of the People."*

The Lord's Prayer

Offering Hymn: "Now Thank We All Our God" (VU 236)

Prayer of Dedication (*from We Cannot Keep from Singing, p. 34*):

All: We sing of God's good news lived out, a church with purpose: faith nurtured and hearts comforted, gifts shared for the good of all, resistance to the forces that exploit and marginalize, fierce love in the face of violence, human dignity defended, members of a community held and inspired by God, corrected and comforted, instrument of the loving Spirit of Christ, creation's mending. We sing of God's mission. Amen.

Hymn: "In the Bulb There Is a Flower" (VU 703) or "Take Up His Song" (MV 213)

Benediction (*from We Cannot Keep from Singing, p. 38*):

**All: Grateful for God's loving action,
We cannot keep from singing.
Creating and seeking relationship,
In awe and trust,
We witness to Holy Mystery who is Wholly Love.
Amen.**

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Pansy is involved in United Church camping both at the board level and as a volunteer director/program leader during the summer camps at West Haven in the West District of Newfoundland and Labrador Conference.

The theme and much of the content of this service was inspired by *We Cannot Keep from Singing: Images from "A Song of Faith"/ A Statement of Faith of the United Church of Canada*, United Church Publishing House, 2007.

Appendix

Additional Resources

Responsive Reading

- “Sing Praises to God, Who Has Shaped” (VU 221)

Prayer of Confession

- “A Christmas Prayer of Confession” (VU 63)

Scripture Readings

(All scripture readings are from the *New Revised Standard Version*.)

- Matthew 5: 13–14
- Luke 1: 46–55
- Isaiah 5: 1–2
- Isaiah 12: 1–2, 5–6
- Psalm 42: 1–5
- Psalm 98: 4–9

Hymns from *Voices United* (VU)

- “Make a Joyful Noise” (VU 820) (opening hymn)
- “Praise the Lord with the Sound of Trumpet” (VU 245)
- “Oh, Sing to Our God” (VU 241)
- “Joyful, Joyful We Adore You” (VU 232)
- “God of the Sparrow” (VU 229)
- “I Sing the Mighty Power” (VU 231)
- “We Praise You for the Sun” (VU 225) (children’s hymn)
- “For the Beauty of the Earth” (VU 226)
- “Sing Your Joy” (VU 253)

Hymns from *More Voices* (MV)

- “Alleluia, Praise to God” (MV 59) (opening hymn)
- “We Sing of Your Glory” (MV 58)
- “Oh a Song Must Rise” (MV 142)
- “This Is the Day” (MV 122) (children’s hymn)
- “By the Well, a Thirsty Woman” (MV 117)
- “Rise Up, Rise Up” (MV 130)